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ABSTRACT

Even Start is a family support program focusing on family literacy and school readiness. These first seven issues of the "Look at Even Start" newsletter cover topics such as transition between preschool and kindergarten, collaboration between programs and between parents and programs, ways Even Start programs respond to parents' needs and challenges, evaluation highlights of Even Start, educational reform, home visits, principles of effective recruitment and retention, and program curriculum. Each issue has a section containing information and program resources, and a section of questions and answers about Even Start. Issues frequently highlight the work of specific program sites or provide detailed discussion of a specific program (examples, Issues 4 and 6). Checklists relevant to the topic of the issue are frequently included. (JW)

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LOOK AT EVEN START

ISSUE ONE

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Bridging the miles

BY MARY JEAN LETENDRE

Mary Jean LeTendre

We receive many phone calls each month in the Office of Compensatory Education Programs requesting information about family literacy and the Even Start Program. In response to this interest, we have decided to publish a newsletter targeted to the needs of Even Start grantees that will also be of interest to others in the field of family literacy.

This newsletter, which we plan to issue about six times a year, will provide updates from the U.S. Department of Education about relevant events and policies, and share successful practices and solutions to problems experienced by current grantees. We hope it will help bridge the miles between Even Start programs and create a network of support among service providers.

In the spirit of networking, I encourage all Even Start state coordinators and grantees to attend one of the technical assistance meetings to be held this June in Washington, DC and San Francisco, California. Emphasis will be placed on adult literacy and the components of Even Start that have parents and children learning together. Douglas Powell of Purdue University, an expert in parenting education and parent involvement, will speak at both meetings and will remain for additional small group interaction and technical assistance throughout two days of each conference. The third day of the conferences, at both sites, will provide information about evaluation requirements and are for 1991 grantees only.

Family Literacy holds great promise for helping young children and their parents. The eyes of the education community are on Even Start. The newsletter, the conferences, and other technical assistance efforts presently in the planning stages are the Department's way of saying that we care and that we will support all of your efforts to make Even Start succeed.

Growth, change... opportunity

BY REP. BILL GOODLING

Representative Bill Goodling

There is nothing I am more proud of than my contribution to the work of each of you in the Even Start program. Even Start is receiving increased national attention as an innovative approach to solving our educational problems through a family approach because of your efforts. Congratulations!

Even Start is continuing to grow and I hope that this year we can get over the $100 million mark. With this growth has come change. As you know, States will begin administering many aspects of Even Start beginning this summer. While I know that there are some concerns about this transition, I believe there are many positive opportunities as well. But just to leave no doubt, I told the State Directors here in Washington that if I hear that the program is being steered off target at the State level then it will be returned to Federal administration as quickly as possible.

Next year we will begin a process of review and possible amendment to Even Start. I have appreciated all the materials you have sent me regarding your programs. Please continue to write me and otherwise keep me informed about ways to strengthen the program. I see us all as partners in this family literacy effort, and we will need to work together in order for Even Start to prosper and grow.

"I see us all as partners..."

Again, thank you for all your hard work.

INSIDE
Transition
BETWEEN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN
A NATIONAL STUDY

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Making the Transition

A national study has implications for the way Even Start programs think about design

BY MARY ELLIN LOGUE

Children enter kindergarten each year with a wide range of prior experiences and skills, and are subjected to programs that vary considerably in sensitivity to their individual differences. While quality preschool programs can provide important benefits, they don't always do so, nor do such benefits necessarily endure.

Prior research suggests that one way to enhance the benefits of early childhood programs may be for schools to provide programs and services that smooth the discontinuity children frequently experience when making the transition from preschool or home into kindergarten.

Studying transition activities

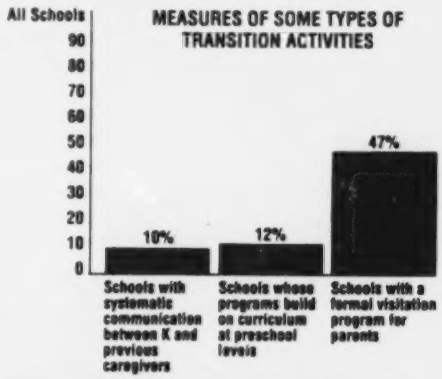
How well are our nation's schools progressing toward the goal of creating continuity between preschool and kindergarten? The recently published final report of the National Transition Study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (Love, Logue, Trudeau, and Thayer, 1992) concludes that public schools do not place a high priority on transition activities. In the study, conducted midway through the 1989-1990 school year, RMC Research Corporation surveyed nationally representative samples of 830 school districts and 1,169 schools with kindergarten classes. In addition, researchers visited eight schools to analyze their transition activities and the contexts in which they occur.

Major Findings

Extent of transition

Transition activities are not widespread in U.S. schools. Only one-fifth of school districts report a "wide range" of transition activities, and schools rarely implement more than a few of them. For example:

- Only 10% of schools report systematic communication between kindergarten teachers and previous caregivers or teachers about kindergarten children;
- Only 12% of schools have kindergarten curricula designed to build on the preschool program; and
- 47% of schools have a formal program for school visitations by parents.



Perceptions about difficulty

School personnel do not believe that most children have much difficulty adjusting to kindergarten. When problems occur, however, adjusting to the academic expectations of kindergarten is the area of greatest difficulty. High-poverty schools are five times as likely as low-poverty schools to report that their students have high levels of difficulty adjusting to the academic demands of kindergarten. Children in these same schools are:

- less likely to have been in a formal preschool program;
- more likely to be in kindergarten classrooms that are academic in focus; and
- more likely to be retained in kindergarten or placed in extra-year classes prior to first grade.

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Categories of transition

Transition activities fall into two distinct categories—those that involve coordination or communication between school and preschool, or those that in one way or another include parents as participants. While, overall, schools are more likely to implement transition activities that involve parents than those that require coordination between schools and preschool, the types of transition activities found in schools often reflect the proportion of children from low-income families served by the schools. There are usually more transition activities involving coordination and communication between preschool and school levels in high-poverty schools, and more activities that involve parents in higher-income schools.

Relevant school characteristics

Certain characteristics of schools are related to the extent of transition activities. These include the presence of a prekindergarten program in the school, school poverty level, district size, and administrative support. There is also more coordination and communication between preschool and school where school personnel have more positive attitudes toward children and parents, and higher expectations for children's school success.

What this means for Even Start

There is no single way to implement transition activities that is appropriate for all schools or programs.

Schools and programs must tailor their transition activities to the needs of children and families they serve.

Schools serving higher numbers of students from low-income families may need to exert special efforts to create preschool-school continuity.

While high poverty schools are more likely to implement activities that [illegible] preschool-kindergarten coordination (e.g., teachers visiting their children's [illegible] records), they are less likely to focus on parents in planning and implementing transition activities. Even Start programs can help bridge this gap by empowering parents and preparing them to deal with schools. Sharing with schools effective strategies for working with the parents who have been in Even Start.

A school climate marked by open communication can positively affect children's kindergarten experience.

The study found that while staff members of high poverty schools generally had less positive attitudes toward children's future success, parent-teacher relationships, and teacher-teacher relations, it also found that better levels of communication are accompanied by more positive expectations for children. Collaborative relationships between Even Start and schools to encourage parent involvement and family literacy may help change school attitudes.

Schools must ensure that their kindergarten programs are of the highest possible quality.

There is little point in carefully planning transition activities for children and families if the kindergarten program children enter is not of equal or better quality than their preschool experience. Even Start can promote quality programs at the kindergarten level by working closely with the schools their children will enter, by initiating ongoing communication between preschool and kindergarten personnel, joint training, and [illegible]. Even Start programs can work with parents to become more [illegible] their children.

The full report, Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools, [illegible] by calling [illegible] or writing to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, Planning and Evaluation Service, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Room 4127, Washington, DC 20202-4244.

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QUESTIONS?

As a new program such as Even Start continues to grow and develop, practitioners and policy makers often have questions. Each week the Even Start office logs numerous telephone calls from practitioners with questions. Since many of these questions are similar, this segment of the Even Start newsletter has been designed to highlight those questions that occur most often.

Q What are the requirements for eligibility of homeless children and their parents?

A As with all participants, children must be under the age of eight and have at least one parent who also participates in Even Start, and who is eligible for services under the Adult Basic Education Act. By definition, however, homeless individuals have no fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence and, therefore, cannot meet the requirement that they reside in the attendance area of a school participating in Chapter 1. To ensure that these children and their parents, who may be among the most needy, are not denied services because of an eligibility requirement they cannot meet, they may participate in Even Start without regard to the residency requirement or to the elementary school the children are attending or would be attending.

RESOURCES

One strategy for bridging the miles is to share information. In each newsletter we will identify one or more key resources—a national group, new publications, key government studies or reports—that have direct implications for Even Start grantees. If you have suggestions for resources that you have found to be particularly helpful in your Even Start work, send them to the newsletter for inclusion in this section.

Looking for information on **collaboration**? A series of documents developed by the Education and Human Resources Consortium may be just what you need. The Education and Human Resources Consortium is a loosely-knit coalition of 24 national organizations whose shared goal is more responsive delivery of education and human services to children and families. This series was designed to bring resources that make a significant contribution to the study and practice of collaboration to a wide audience. By providing such resources, the Consortium hopes to foster dialogue and constructive action.

The first publication in this series, **New Partnerships: Educations Stake in the Family Support Act of 1988**, explores the potential for collaboration among education and welfare agencies in the implementation of the Family Support Act. It was released in March of 1989 and is directed to an audience of state and local education and human policy makers, administrators and practitioners.

A second monograph, **What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships To Connect Children and Families in Comprehensive Services** (1991) looks at why local schools, health and welfare agencies, youth service agencies, community-based organizations, and others must join forces on behalf of children and families, and offers guidance based on emerging experience about how they can move forward together. It describes what high quality, comprehensive services should entail and focuses on interagency partnerships as a potential key to the large-scale delivery of such services. What It Takes describes the factors that affect local efforts at both the system and service delivery levels and provides guidelines to help beginning initiatives succeed.

The third document, **Thinking Collaboratively: Ten Questions and Answers to Help Policy Makers Improve Children's Services**, is authored by former Iowa State Senator Charles Bruner in 1991. It uses a question and answer format to help state and local policy makers consider how best to foster local collaboration that truly benefits children and families. Checklists are provided to help policy makers quickly assess key issues in establishing interagency initiatives, demonstration projects, and statewide reforms to foster collaboration.

Copies of each of these documents are available for $3.00 prepaid. Make check or money orders payable to IEL, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036-5541. Telephone: 202-822-8405. Any or all portions of these reports may be freely reproduced and circulated without prior permission.

In future newsletters, we will highlight successful Even Start projects. If you would like to be considered, send us an article about your projects. Send your comments, news or ideas for articles to:

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ISSUE TWO

Pulling together– the great potential in collaboration

BY JOHN T. MACDONALD

The critical core of Even Start—the concept that good things happen when mothers, fathers, and children work and think and learn together—makes the program one of the most valuable opportunities for American families. Even Start stands at the vanguard of emerging family literacy programs because it offers a concrete model for integrating services that nurture one another for the benefit of the family: early childhood programs, parenting/adult education, and parents and children together. The simple beauty of Even Start is that it helps families strengthen themselves; in turn, families are America's strength.

John T. MacDonald

At the same time, however, Even Start relies on the effective rallying of commu-

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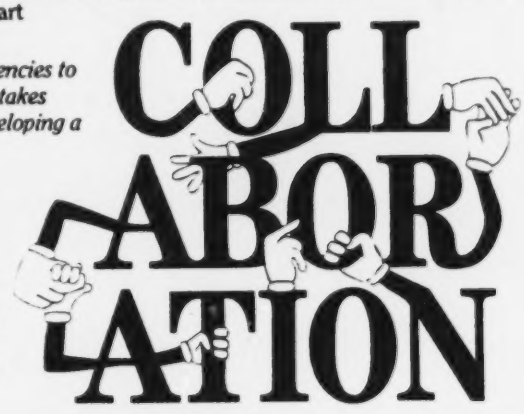
INSIDE
Collaboration
A POSITIVE/NEGATIVE CHECKLIST

Collaboration answers some challenges... and makes new ones



BY C. RALPH ADLER AND PATRICIA SEPPANEN

Collaboration emerges from necessity and challenge. The expressions can make it sound so easy: many hands make light work, two heads are better than one. But there's nothing as rewarding as a solution that comes from many people getting ready to tackle the same problem. A kind of magic results when one group says to another: "We have these resources, you have those resources, and we both have these challenges. Can we make something that's better than any one of us?"

Even Start programs all over the country are now working hard to forge effective collaborations. The regulatory requirements of Even Start collaboration are well known; the realities of collaboration are just now coming clear to programs struggling to make them work. A body of conventional wisdom about Even Start collaborations is developing, and it consistently echoes more broad-based experiences and research on interagency collaboration.

Here are a few things Even Start people have said in terms of forming collaborative relationships. The comments have interesting connections to generic collaboration research and with some of the common challenges Even Start personnel have reported.

- *"You can't expect collaborating agencies to have the same agenda as yours. It takes time to build trust. Time spent developing a shared vision is worth it."*

Research on collaboration certainly supports this lesson from this Even Start professional's experience. In fact, one of the five "preconditions for success" identified for effective collaborations is an assessment of compatibility and desirability: an understanding of individual missions and a desire to forge a new, shared mission out of them.

What are the other four preconditions for success which collaborators of all types across the nation have identified as critical?

- Positive attitudes toward participating agencies and the idea of collaboration
- Recognized need for the collaboration
- Awareness of potential partners
- Capacity for maintaining the collaboration over time

- *"Community collaboration needs more support to truly succeed. Turf is more important to some than client needs."*

Collaboration does not occur without costs. The guiding wisdom is that collaboration **ultimately** results in more streamlined, more efficient, and more effective services for children and families. Towards those goals, however, there are new types of energy to be generated and expended, and expectations of loss of autonomy to cope with.

Loss of autonomy

Turf, indeed, is an issue. The blending of organizational missions, the sharing of resources, and the spreading of client services across organizations results in a loss of autonomy. It's a fact of life in collaboration. Participants need to understand up front that lines of authority and perceptions of responsibility will change when collaborations result in new organizational forms. The best preparation for all involved includes keeping lines of communication permanently open and active so that participants can focus on the developing new structure and its purpose, understanding that **everyone** will experience this "turf shift," keeping the focus continually on the client as the beneficiary of more effective organizational design, and gradually learning the

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Collaboration!

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new benefits of shared authority and responsibility. Partners must also create a mechanism for diagnosing problems and developing workable solutions.

■ Expenditures of staff time, energy, and thought.

While collaboration makes sense, it isn't easy. Entering a collaborative mode does **not** mean that participants will have an easier job or that there will be less for everyone to do. To sustain the collaboration and constantly monitor the health and effectiveness of the relationship, lots of new kinds of staff thinking, time, and energy are needed to plan, maintain, monitor, and change the collaboration, as needed, over time. Collaborations are dynamic, fluid arrangements when well designed; they cannot be left "on their own" to continue on like a perpetual motion organization. And, as suggested above, the personal and emotional energy it takes to keep a collaboration going can be intense.

■ Money

If a collaboration succeeds in taking on a life of its own because it serves clients more incisively, it should result, ultimately, in a more efficient and effective use of funds than would have occurred with a number of organizations working independently. If a collaboration succeeds in taking on a life of its own by serving clients more incisively, it should use funds more efficiently than a number of organizations working independently. Collaborative arrangements like Even Start typically benefit from the infusion of additional funds and the reallocation or dedication of funds from participating agencies. If the collaboration works, it will accomplish results that no one agency could afford alone.

- *"Coordination with other agencies is essential."*

Coordination is certainly an essential component in the bigger collaboration picture. However, arrangements between organizations can take many forms on many levels, some more productive than others. When Even Start law and regulations were created, they called for programs to establish "collaborations" with other agencies. In the language of collaboration research, that requires the most extensive and interrelated type of working relationship, which is the spirit of Even Start. Here's how the three categories of working relationships are more formally described. Use them as a personal check on the relationships among agencies and programs involved with your Even Start program. Where does each relationship fit on the continuum? Where would you like the relationship to be?

■ Outreach

Outreach is the simplest form of interaction between organizations in a community. The focus is strictly on sharing information about services, sharing concerns about the need for other types of services, or the referral of clients to and from a program. Typically there is very little joint decision making or joint delivery of services. This means there are few demands on the program funds for cooperative activities.

A Collaboration Checklist

What factors are helping or hindering your collaboration efforts?

Many factors work to make or break collaborations. Here are two lists to help you get a sense of which factors might be at work in your collaborative relationships in Even Start. Which ones are present in your program? Which ones might need the most work?

Factors which help collaboration

- ☐ Perception that the collaboration is needed
- ☐ Benefits outweigh the costs
- ☐ Positive attitudes
- ☐ Consensus between administrators and staff
- ☐ Players see each others as valuable sources/resources
- ☐ Ability to maintain program identity, prestige, and power
- ☐ Reward system for staff who reinforce the collaboration
- ☐ Accessibility to other organizations
- ☐ Positive evaluations of other organizations and their staffs
- ☐ Similarity or overlap in resources and goals.
- ☐ Common commitment to families (parents and their children)
- ☐ Common definitions, ideologies, interests, and approaches
- ☐ Perception of partial interdependence
- ☐ Good history of relations
- ☐ Procedures have been standardized across organizations
- ☐ Occupational diversity of staff that is complementary
- ☐ Leaders favor the collaboration
- ☐ Chances exist for regular contact and exchange of information
- ☐ Existence of boundary-crossing roles
- ☐ Compatibility or similarity of organizational structures

Factors which can hinder collaborations

- ☐ Vested interests of program or other agencies
- ☐ Perception of threat, competition for resources or clients
- ☐ Perception of loss of program identity
- ☐ Perception of loss of prestige or role as "authority"
- ☐ Lower service effectiveness
- ☐ Alienation of some families
- ☐ Inability to serve new families who would be drawn to the prog
- ☐ Differing leadership styles
- ☐ Differing professional background of staff
- ☐ Disparities in staff training
- ☐ Different priorities, ideologies, outlooks, or goals for families
- ☐ Lack of a common "language"
- ☐ Staff members don't favor the collaboration
- ☐ Negative evaluations of other organizations
- ☐ Imperfect knowledge of other agencies in the community
- ☐ Poor history of relations
- ☐ Costs in terms of resources of staff time outweigh benefits
- ☐ Lack of communication among higher level staff
- ☐ Bureaucracies that inhibit internal, external communication
- ☐ Centralization of authority, "red tape"
- ☐ Little staff time devoted to boundary-crossing roles
- ☐ Differences in priorities, goals, tasks
- ☐ High staff turnover
- ☐ Other organizations have little to offer

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Even Start programs may make the mistake of thinking they are involved in a collaborative relationship when really it is cooperative, a category which implies a greater degree of interaction than "outreach" but less than complete collaboration. Cooperation takes the form of informal agreements between organizations to improve the quality of the program, or to increase efficiency by sharing resources such as buildings, equipment, or staff. Organizations may also share responsibility for particular services, such as child care, counseling, or transportation.

Because the commitment of organizational resources is modest, the relationship is typically less formal and therefore much more difficult to maintain. It is generally dependent on the informal agreements between the initiators and, as a result, can be vulnerable to staff turnover: when the individuals who started the cooperative arrangement leave, the relationship falls apart.

The main difference between cooperative and collaborative initiatives: In collaborative relationships (described below) a unique new programmatic entity is created, in which participating organizations share responsibility for goal setting, decision making, resource contributions, and commitments.

■ *Collaboration*

Collaboration usually leads to the creation of a distinct, new program with an identity which is separate from the participating organizations. It typically requires the ongoing commitment of staff and/or financial resources by each organization. Organizations may agree to divide program activities among themselves, or a third party may organize activities and responsibilities of each unit. This type of linkage is perhaps the most difficult and time-consuming to develop and maintain, because it requires joint goals, decisions, and actions, as well as involvement of both top-line administrators and service providers.

Look over the checklists on these pages to orient yourself to your Even Start program's strengths and weaknesses in terms or your collaborations.

nity services and organizations, both for maximum effect and fiscal efficiency. The community, in productive ways, gathers around individual families in supportive service; this is the essence of collaboration—a second essential building block of Even Start.

Collaboration isn't always easy, especially for agencies and institutions that may not be used to working together. I've made it a priority as Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education to find ways for agencies to collaborate more effectively, especially those that are federally funded. Organizations that spring from federal initiatives and funding must work towards a more connected understanding of how families can be served, and how the strengths of different agencies can be brought to bear to serve family interests and needs.

This issue of the Even Start newsletter covers some of the most essential concepts of collaboration. I'd like to offer my help by suggesting some of the federal programs that make ideal Even Start collaborators:

Chapter 1. Even Start and Chapter 1 are natural partners. Many Chapter 1 districts offer early childhood programs, with large numbers of already identified children—leading to potential Even Start client families. As forerunners in designing parent involvement programs, Chapter 1 can be a great resource for training Even Start personnel on working effectively with parents, especially in terms of helping parents understand issues of transition as children prepare for school.

Head Start. Services to children through Head Start may also be accessed by Even Start programs, including early childhood education programs, child care, needs assessment for children (through networks developed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and transportation. Head Start has developed highly effective recruiting techniques and outreach efforts such as home visiting programs, two other areas where Even Start personnel might pick up some ideas. Think of Head Start, Chapter 1 and Even Start as partners on a continuum: depending on your program's design, your family clients may actually take part in Head Start or Chapter 1 programs, or be served by them through transition activities. These programs also share philosophical similarities with Even Start, such as understanding the value of involving parents in the design and implementation of policies and programs.

Other federal programs. As a program that serves the "whole family" in its quest to strengthen relationships through literacy events, Even Start must also take advantage of the resources offered through the Joint Training Partnership Act, JOBS, Chapter 2, Voluntary Literacy Programs, Education of the Handicapped Act, and Adult Education Act—all programs that have targeted adult or family education or literacy skills.

Other community resources. Every American Community is served by groups of people who are helping to sustain the education, health, and wellbeing of its residents. I urge you to seek out these organizations, talk with them about how they might work together with Even Start, and build productive collaboration bridges. Look to local and state welfare and education offices, religious service groups, charitable and volunteer agencies, day care providers, and health agencies.

While Even Start regulations require collaborations with some agencies, some of the most valuable collaborations will come from your creative ideas. You know your community well, and what it has to offer. I encourage you to create and innovate, and to be flexible.

Make the connections and make them work. Good luck!

QUESTIONS?

Q Why are Even Start programs required to collaborate with other agencies?

A Section 1054(b)(7) of the Act reflects awareness that several other programs may address the needs of parents and children eligible for Even Start. It is the purpose of Even Start to successfully combine adult education for parents and quality educational experiences for children into a single program.

For example, the work of Even Start will be to create an environment in which motivation for literacy will be enhanced through effective parenting. In many cases, there may already be existing programs and other community resources for these purposes. Rather than supersede or compete, Even Start funds are intended to build on these already existing resources in order to create an integrated family literacy program.

Given the limited size of the Even Start authorization and the large number of existing local, state, and federal programs focused on literacy and early childhood education, it is critical that applicants use Even Start funds as the extra piece needed to fashion a complete Even Start family literacy program from these various sources of support.

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QUESTIONS?

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How may Even Start projects collaborate with other agencies?

Even Start projects are cooperative projects that should build on existing community resources in two ways:

■ **Preparation of an application and project management.** Applicants are required to collaborate in preparing the proposed project application and running the project. An LEA must collaborate with a community based organization, public agency, institution of higher education, or other non-profit organization; a non-profit organization must collaborate with a LEA. (See section 1052(d)(1) of the Act.)

This collaboration, together with other aspects of project planning, helps ensure practical and effective ways to identify and recruit eligible applicants, identification of relevant programs with which the project should coordinate, and identification of research and other information needed to design quality proposals. Special training and other services essential to successful projects may be provided by other organizations.

■ **Projects serving similar populations.** Funded projects are required to coordinate with other programs serving similar populations, specifically, programs funded under Chapter 1, relevant programs under Chapter 2, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, and Head Start, Volunteer Literacy, and other relevant programs. (See sections 1054(b)(7) abd 1056(b)(4) of the Act.)

RESOURCES

Harvard Family Research Project. *Building Partnerships: Models of Family Support and Education Programs.* Cambridge: HFRP.

This booklet contains profiles of five diverse programs working out a better future for children through family-focused and comprehensive service delivery. The programs are: North Dakota's Child Welfare Reform Initiative, Iowas Decategorization Project, Florida's Full Service Schools, Brattleboro's (Vermont) Early Education Services, and Boston's (Massachusetts) Medical-Legal Services Project. Each profile includes a history of the initiative, a description of the program, and reflections on the past and future by the state- or local-level director. The goal of this booklet is to provide policy makers, advocates, and administrators with concise information on policy development and the program characteristics of these five varied approaches to attaining comprehensive services.

These five programs represent efforts to transform public service systems that deal with children, families, and communities, exemplifying the characteristics of the evolving comprehensive approach of the 1990's. The programs combine services to meet the multifaceted goals and needs of families. They encourage cooperation and collaboration among agencies and attempt to institutionalize mechanisms for initiating and sustaining this collaboration. These programs involve participants on advisory boards, serving as resources for one another, and they evolve to meet participant concerns through individual or community-based assessment. They also strive to be sensitive to the cultural characteristics of the communities they serve. Local empowerment is part of this new way of doing business and it operates at every level: for the individual, the family, the staff, and the community.

While they share a common, family support philosophy, the five programs' patterns of service delivery and strategies of advancing systemic change differ. Different agencies—education, health and social services—take the lead role in mobilizing the resources to transform the service delivery system. This reflects the range of possible entry points for collaboration and approaches to making service systems more responsive to community conditions. Because the interest in collaboration spans many levels of the public service system, the programs also illustrate both state and local initiatives.

Other Selected Readings on Collaboration

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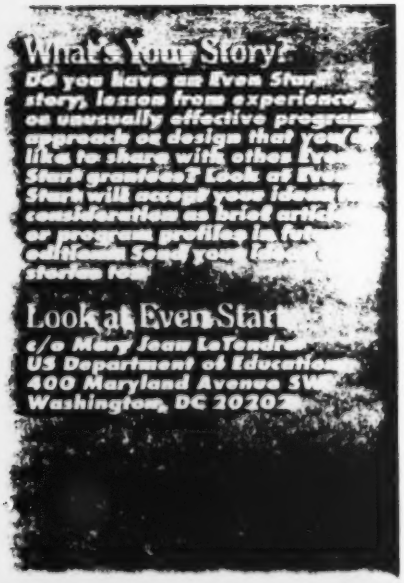

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ISSUE THREE

LOOK AT EVEN START

Beliefs and Behaviors

Parent contributions to children's school success come from complex patterns

BY DOUGLAS R. POWELL
Purdue University

The designers of Even Start could not have been more on target with the decision to include parenting as a major component. Compelling research evidence indicates the quality of the home environment in the early years of a child's life has a powerful and long-term impact on school readiness and early school success. Parents provide a critical foundation for children's academic competence.

Two important questions need to be addressed by local Even Start programs when developing a parent education and support component: What specific parent beliefs and behaviors are associated with children's school readiness and early school success? What lessons have been learned from other programs aimed at supporting lower-income parents in their child-rearing roles? Fortunately, research conducted in the past two decades offers some answers to these important questions.

Parent Beliefs and Behaviors

It is useful to think of parent contributions to children's school success as a composite or pattern of beliefs and behaviors rather than separate influences. Researchers have examined key parts of the larger pattern, but it is not possible to identify a "magic bullet" or most important influence. Quite simply, good things go together. In parenting, the "good things" for children include the following:

- **A view of human development as a complex process involving the child as an active contributor to development.** Parents who hold this belief understand that children are not akin to pieces of clay to be molded or computers to be programmed. They bring characteristics and dispositions that help shape how people in their social environments respond to them.
- **Realistic, in-depth understandings of the child's abilities and interests.** It is essential for parents to know their child. This enables parents to form reasonable expectations of their child's achievements and to provide experiences that genuinely challenge the child. Unrealistic or superficial understandings of a child's abilities and interests can lead to under-stimulating or overly-pressurized settings.
- **Recognizing and strengthening literacy experiences that occur within routine family interactions in the home and community.** Research shows that young children's experiences with emergent literacy generally occur within normal daily routines such as running errands, family discussions, and such chores as setting the dinner table rather

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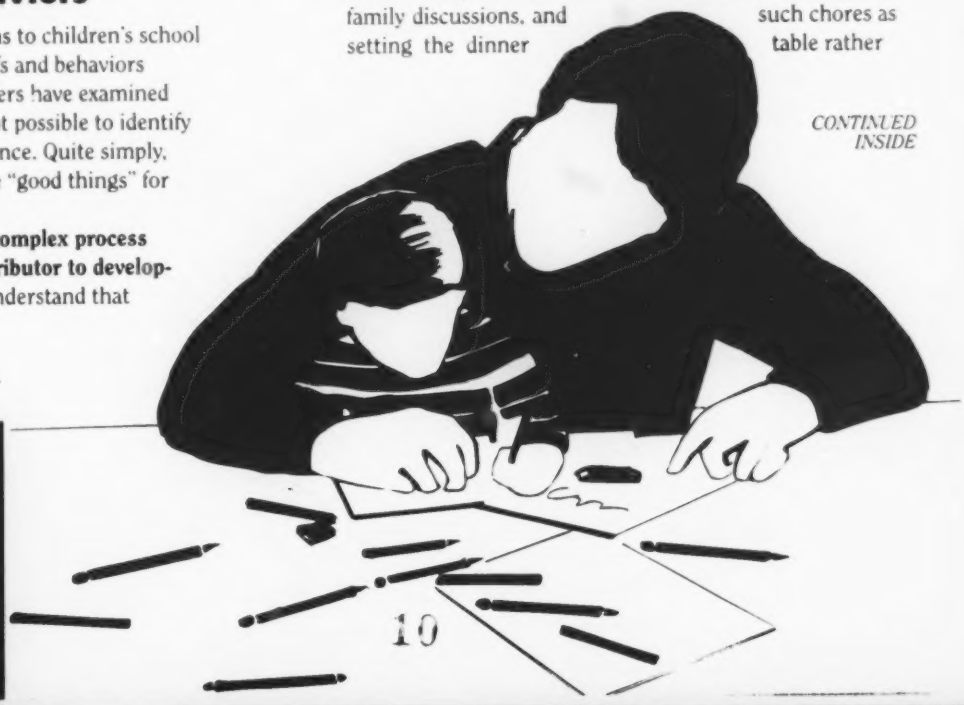

INSIDE

Parenting:
HOW FOUR PROGRAMS RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE

Reading, Pennsylvania

Focus on age-appropriateness

The first two years of Reading, Pennsylvania's Even Start parenting curriculum saw a focus on a more "traditional" curriculum, revolving around such topics as nutrition, discipline, responsibility, and self-respect. After perceiving little effect from this programming approach, the program decided to change the focus of the curriculum to specifically teach parents different age-appropriate literacy activities, which they in turn can teach to their children. The parenting lesson is now taught to adults through emphasis on the objective of the lesson, and on the need to adapt the lesson to the ages of the children through group discussion of previous experiences and role playing by the parents. When parents join their children in parent-child time, this becomes a "lab" session where parents practice the newly-learned activity. The emphasis on clearly and repeatedly stating the parenting objective, role-playing, and actual practice are key factors in making the parenting program a success.

Carthage, North Carolina

Focus on how children think and feel

The parenting component of the Even Start program in Moore County, North Carolina is built upon a home/school partnership which enables parents to give their children the best possible start in life. By increasing parents' knowledge and involvement in children's development and education, parents can become better equipped to support the educational and emotional growth of the entire family. One of the most successful parenting activities focuses on the egocentric thinking of preschool age children. This involves "point-of-view" role playing in which the parent pretends to see the world from their child's point of view, both physically and mentally. Parents become more aware of how their children think, feel, and function in relation to their environment.

Parenting: Beliefs and Behaviors

CONTINUED FROM COVER

than as isolated events for the sake of literacy. Many parts of a shopping trip can be turned into "teachable moments" for children.

- **Reading to children in a way that actively involves the child.** Research points to the benefit of reading frequently to young children in a style that encourages a high degree of their involvement. This involves answering questions about pictures and story figures, holding the book, turning the pages, and pointing to pictures, letters or words. Reading and writing materials also should be accessible to young children.
- **Using television appropriately.** There are many excellent programs on television for young children and their parents. It is helpful for parents to watch television with their children and to talk with them about the programs. Too much television viewing can be detrimental to children's academic performance, however.

- **Encouraging the child's active manipulation of a variety of stimulating objects.** For the young child, kitchen pots, pans, and wooden spoons can be as stimulating as expensive toys. It is important for children's toys and other objects to be flexible for many creative uses in children's play.
- **Asking children questions that stimulate thinking and promote verbal problem-solving skills.** Open-ended questions contribute to children's critical thinking abilities. It is useful for parents to encourage children to anticipate an outcome or to imagine how someone else might think or feel about something. Children benefit from making their own guided discoveries rather than having answers always provided for them.
- **A supportive parenting style.** This includes responsiveness, flexibility, warm concern, emotional displays of positive affect toward the child, and acceptance of the child's feelings, interests, and ideas.

This list is not a guaranteed prescription for early school success. How well children adjust to school depends on a number of factors, especially how well the school accommodates a diverse range of child abilities and characteristics. Parents are not solely responsible for their children's academic performance.

Lessons Learned

Two major lessons have been learned in the past two decades of this nation's experience in providing parent education and support programs for lower-income families. These lessons can be used by local Even Start programs to guide decisions about the design and implementation of parenting components.

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- **Effective programs for parents are responsive to parent and community characteristics.** One program size does not fit all populations. The content and methods of community-based programs need to be adaptive and flexible rather than rigid cookie-cutter replications of an existing model. It is essential to offer programs in a way that genuinely incorporates the parent's perspective on what is needed. The notion of empowerment is a prevalent theme emerging from this lesson. It calls for parents to be genuine collaborators or partners in the life of a program rather than passive recipients of information and services dictated by professionals.
- **The magnitude of program effects is greater when programs are intensive and comprehensive.** Changes in parent beliefs and behaviors do not come easily. There are multiple determinants of parenting, including the parent's personality and psychological resources, the level of stress and support present in the larger social environment, and characteristics of the child such as gender and temperament. Moreover, most parents also hold strong beliefs about their children in particular and about child development in general, and new information is filtered and edited by existing beliefs. For these reasons, programs need to offer a range of services over a period of time that address many aspects of family functioning. By design, Even Start recognizes the importance of this lesson by offering services targeted at important child and parent needs.

Program challenges

The above lessons are not without their challenges. Programs need to balance the needs of the child and parent so that pressing parent or family issues do not preclude attention to the child. For example, many programs have found that chronic crises in some families surrounding basic needs require so much program time that concentrated focus on parenting and the child is diminished.

Another challenge is to generate useful procedures for tailoring program content and methods to the needs and characteristics of a particular population. What aspects of child and parent functioning are important to tap in making decisions about specific program services? And in what ways will parents be involved in making truly important decisions about the programs in which they are involved?

Local Even Start programs offer excellent opportunities to explore innovative responses to these challenges. The solutions will be of great interest to a nation increasingly interested in effective ways to support families with young children. What is more, the benefits for Even Start children and parents will be enormous.

(Douglas R. Powell is currently the Department Head at the Department of Child Development and Family Studies at Purdue University.)

Manhattan, Kansas

Focus on the integration of parenting

The Manhattan, Kansas Even Start project uses an experimental whole language curriculum with children's literature as the springboard for family learning. This occurs within a holistic mode of service delivery: parenting is not viewed as a separate component or another set of skills to be taught in isolation. Rather, it is interwoven into the very fabric of the Even Start program. The staff continuously models parenting and positive communication skills to families, from the home visitors who gently distract a baby who is playing in a purse to the office staff who greet parents and children warmly each day. The staff "parent the parents" to provide an effective example to families. Parent information is delivered in an integrated, interactive context through reading and discussing children's literature. Workshops form a community of learners where families support each other.

California Migrant Education Even Start

Focus on an interagency approach

The California Migrant Even Start Program coordinates with adult education, community colleges, and other literacy programs to offer migratory parents English as a second language, literacy, and parenting skills that will increase their occupational and economic options, and opportunities to assimilate in mainstream society. Fourteen project sites form a network of coordinated services which result in a multi-agency service delivery system, rather than the six sites which would have resulted from a non-coordinated system. Parent services are delivered through both center-based and home-based offerings, as are early childhood education activities.

QUESTIONS?

Q *What is parenting education? How can it help us meet Goal 1 (by the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn)?*

A The ultimate goal of parenting education, especially in Even Start, is to help parents understand how their actions affect their children's learning. It provides an opportunity for parents to reflect on how they raise children and to exchange ideas with other parents that they might find helpful and useful in their own homes.

Parenting education has an impact on children's health, attitudes, values, self-image and understandings. Parents shape all of these parts of children's lives. Parents' child-rearing beliefs and practices affect school readiness and school achievement.

Because different parents have different sets of interests and needs in relation to learning more about parenting, flexibility is a key component of Even Start parenting programs. Some focus more strongly on home visits by trained staff, who are often selected from the local community. Others work with parents in groups in centers. Some parenting programs help parents to support and advise each other. The flexibility is critical to successful parenting programs ... flexibility in program location, scheduling, activities, and content. Because child-rearing is value-driven, parenting programs need to reflect this range of interests and needs and respect the cultural, socioeconomic, historical, and personal bases of parent behavior and beliefs.

What's Your Story?

Do you have an Even Start story, lesson from experience, or unusually effective program approach or design that you'd like to share with other Even Start grantees? Look at Even Start will accept your ideas for consideration as brief articles or program profiles in future editions. Send your ideas or stories to:

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400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

RESOURCES

Powell, Douglas R. (July 1991). *Strengthening Parental Contributions to School Readiness and Early School Learning*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. ED 340467

This paper provides a review and synthesis of research pertaining to implementation of the National Goal for Education calling for parents to prepare their children for school success. It has been organized to inform the design of a public awareness initiative aimed primarily at parents, and examines research regarding the following major questions:

- To what extent do parent practices and beliefs in the early years contribute to children's success in school?
- To what extent are desired parent practices carried out by parents?
- How do parents view the task of preparing their child for school?

Abt Associates. (February 1991). *Working with Familes: Promising Programs Help Parents Support Young Children's Learning*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Policy Planning, U.S. Department of Education.

This report summarizes a study that examined seventeen family education programs selected from a pool of programs identified in a national search as promising and innovative. It focuses on a particular category of family education programs: those that work with parents with the primary goal of enhancing children's cognitive development and school-related achievement.

The goal of this study was to describe and analyze the strategies that promising family education programs use to recruit disadvantaged families, sustain parent involvement, staff programs, and establish positive relationships with the schools. The finidings offer guidance for future program development and implementation.

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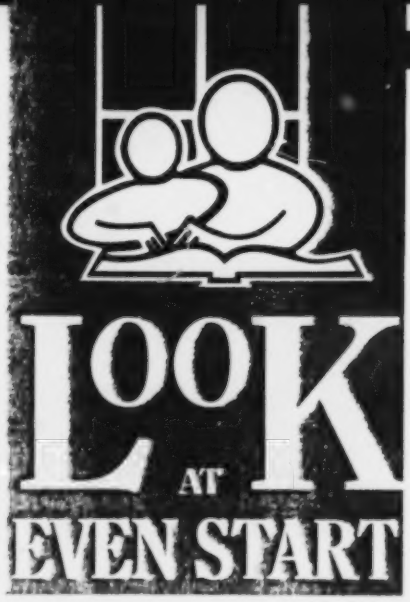
ISSUE FOUR



Education Reform

The true beginning of the 21st Century education renaissance

Last fall was the first time in 30 years that I was not in a school with principals, teachers, and children. I missed being there. We in the Clinton Administration want to stay connected with your real world because it is critical that the policies established in Washington be responsive to the needs of the children and families. President Clinton cares a lot about education and he believes education reform should be high on the Nation's agenda. We know that the strength of our democracy depends on an educated citizenry. I would like to share the direction which we in the Clinton Administration are taking for education to assist your work as educators on the front lines.

More than ever, as our population ages, young people must be capable of contributing to the productivity of our country. We can't spare anyone. It's not just a matter of equity, but of survival, to make sure that every child learns, lives, and grows to his or her full potential. You are the guardians of our Nation's most precious resource, the minds and spirits of our children. Even Start legislation continues to reinforce this premise, to target young children most in need from families in high poverty areas and of low literacy.

The President's 1995 budget includes $10.5 billion for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization, a $1 billion increase. We hope Congress goes along with us in better targeting Title I funds on the highest poverty schools most in need. Under current law, 43% of Chapter 1 money goes to the highest poverty urban and rural counties where 45% of America's poor children live. We want 50% of the dollars to go to those counties. As I said at the beginning, we can't afford to lose a single child. Thirteen percent of the highest poverty schools (75% poverty and above) are not served by the current Chapter 1 program. Our proposal would require school districts to serve all their 75% poverty schools and above before serving other schools. This means that high poverty secondary schools not served now would receive Title I funds under our proposal and Even Start programs would target these communities.

The Clinton Administration has proposed a set of far-reaching, comprehensive education reform initiatives (including Goals 2000, School-to-Work Opportunities, Safe Schools, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization) to improve teaching and learning for all children. Goals 2000 will enable this country to build on the efforts you have already begun. There is no longer any room in America's schools for the tyranny of low expectations which all too often has resulted in a two-tiered system: real opportunity for some and dead end results for others. We must come together in a new national commitment to high standards for all children that will equip them for the challenges of the 21st Century. The

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By Thomas W. Payzant
Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education

INSIDE

Evaluation highlights
Even Start PEP approvals
Fall conferences

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Evaluation activities are starting to expand

National Evaluation: In March of 1994, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a contract to Fu Associates, Ltd., with a subcontract to Abt Associates Inc., to conduct a second national evaluation of the Even Start program. This four-year study builds on the prior national evaluation conducted by Abt Associates Inc., RMC Research Corporation, and Pelavin Associates. The local evaluation and PEP/NDN activities continue to be part of the Even Start evaluation activities.

The universe data collection system developed in the first evaluation (NEIS) has been modified based on projects' and contractors' experiences. The revised data collection system, called the Even Start Information System (ESIS), will collect information from all Even Start projects about program services and the characteristics of program families. Information about program outcomes for children and parents, as well as detailed participation data, will be collected in a subset of projects as part of a Sample Study.

In addition to the ESIS and Sample Study, the national evaluation study will include site visits to migrant Even Start projects on Indian reservations. The visits will focus on the special features of these Even Start projects and the appropriateness of the ESIS in these sites.

New Case Study Projects: The Department is also planning to conduct case studies of projects with interesting NEIS data, starting with projects that have exemplary adult education components. These studies will provide insights into key elements of program components.

Local Evaluation Guides: Finally, the Department has already started work on a project with RMC Research Corporation to develop two local evaluation guides – one for local impact evaluations and one for local management evaluations. The local impact evaluation guide will also serve for assembling the evidence needed to pass PEP to enter NDN. Both guides will be developed in collaboration with local evaluators and project directors.

Education reform

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challenges demand nothing less than reinventing the way schools, school districts, and the state and federal government do business. More of the same will not be good enough.

We must reconnect all those who spend time with our children. We must involve the parents, teachers, and the entire community to work together and put our children first. Even Start programs are examples of new partnerships among existing community resources resulting in an improved range of services for children and families. You are reconnecting those supports for our children. You certainly appreciate the need for greater local flexibility and accountability in using the vast array of federal programs in the most effective and efficient ways possible to meet local needs. Each of you is finding the way that responds uniquely to the complexity, demographics, history, and needs of your students, families, and community.

You have the experience and the ability to make new connections and the vision to improve teaching and learning for all young people in America. You know we need to break the conspiracy of low expectations for some of our students, both children and adult learners, and hold all to the same high standards of excellence, rather than relegate some to an inferior second track. You have the wonderful stories to tell. If we go the extra mile, all children and adults still requiring additional basic education can learn.

I want to say a few more things about our Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization proposal. The current structure of many discrete, categorical programs, Chapter 1, bilingual and others, each with their separate sets of regulations and mechanisms, has often led to the treatment of narrow needs instead of a focus on the whole child, the whole family, and the whole school. Only you know how much harder this makes your work.

Well, that's going to change. When Congress reauthorizes ESEA, we expect to remove many federal obstacles to decisions on school staffing, budget, and instructional materials. They should be made by school principals, teachers, and parents. Schools will have new authority to use Title I funds with other program funds as they think best to carry out reform plans. Recognizing that greater gains for children and families are seen in longer participation in Even Start programs, the new legislation will require year-round programming and, as a minimum, programs must target children for a three year age span. There will be greater flexibility in program implementation, allowing for a startup period, expanding eligible participants to all extended family, and adding teenage parents as eligible for parenting component.

You understand the central role of parents in educational renewal. It is imperative that we as educators extend a welcoming and encouraging hand to all parents, especially parents of special populations. Improving parent-child

Two PEP firsts!

Two Even Start programs have become the first to be approved by the Program Effectiveness Panel (PEP) for inclusion in the National Diffusion Network.

The major factor that contributes to the success of the **Oklahoma City Public Schools Even Start** is the total integration at one site of all three components of the program. The program meets families' needs with home visits, transportation via school buses, and breakfast for mothers. Other features to note are services to infants and the strong emphasis the staff places on role modeling throughout all components. Other strengths of the program's application to PEP were adult education pre- and post-test scores compared to NEIS results and parents' involvement with their children's schools.

The second Even Start program to achieve PEP validation is the **Even Start Family Learning Center, Webster Groves School District, Rock Hill, Missouri.** The primary reason for their success is also integration of all family literacy components, but into an off-campus facility. Other strengths include strong comparison data on parent and child achievements, behaviors, and attitudes. They also excelled when compared to the national evaluation NEIS data. Other features include: transportation for families, meals provided at the center, fund raising activities with families, and an end-of-year "Celebrating Success" trip.

Fall Conferences

There will be regional Even Start meetings in fall 1994!

Remember to budget for conference attendance in fiscal year 1994-95.

More information will follow in the next Even Start newsletter.

interaction is the cornerstone of the Even Start legislation. After all, parents will always be their children's first and foremost teachers. We want to empower parents to know their children and be active in their children's education in the home and at school. Renewing these connections to our children, parents, community, and schools, Secretary Riley, in his very important State of Education address, is calling for a national family involvement campaign, the challenge of our time. Even Start legislation already recognizes the link between family involvement and their children's potential success or failure in school through its emphasis on family literacy and parenting skill building. It is imperative that all educators similarly encourage all parents to nurture the environment in which our children grow and mature. Ultimately, the answer lies in the homes and communities, where our children should be learning about honesty, civility, hard work, and self respect.

As I said earlier, your agenda is our agenda. We all care about our children and youth. This is why we are committed to change and new flexibility and why we encourage you to build those new connections and partnerships that improve the education of our children. The whole of our reform efforts must be greater than the sum of the parts.

What I have sketched out for you represents a fundamental change in how education is thought about in Washington. With your help, we will achieve a new partnership with local schools, school districts, and states where we work together on comprehensive approaches to improving education to serve this generation of young people. This change is long overdue...we must seize the moment.

This is why in the critical weeks ahead, as Congress moves to enact Safe Schools and the reauthorization of ESEA and the Administration moves to implement School to Work Opportunities, I ask you to support the President's legislative agenda and budget. Recognize that the President's budget, our legislative commitment to reform, is all the stronger if your support is public and tangible. We like to think of our program as bipartisan and pro-children. Strong public education is in everyone's interest.

Let us resolve: We will not lose this generation of children and youth to violence, despair, and spiritual desolation. We have the capability to achieve excellence in education for all of our children. Indeed every child can learn and deserves to be taught. The power of reform rests with each of you. You can begin to lead our children to the peak. I urge you to make 1994 the true beginning of the education renaissance of the 21st Century. You are equal to the task. Together we can make a positive difference in the lives of all of America's children and youth.

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. Brizius, Jack A., and Foster, Susan A. (1993) *Generation to Generation: Realizing the Promise of Family Literacy.* Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

The family literacy movement has grown into a national strategy to break the cycle of poverty and dependency. Learning together, parents and children can overcome incredible odds. So many families in need, who are participating in family literacy programs, are finding this to be true. This book defines family literacy and its purpose, traces the family literacy movement, and acts as a guideline to set up new family literacy programs in communities.

QUESTIONS?

What are the significant changes being proposed for Even Start in the ESEA reauthorization?

Recognizing that greater gains are seen in longer participation in Even Start, the Department of Education's proposal provides for greater continuity of services by requiring year round programming, and prohibiting program designs that would limit family participation to a period of less than three years. The proposed legislation also strengthens the requirement to recruit and serve families most in need, extends services to teen parents, and improves the linkages between schools and communities by requiring stronger collaboration in the application and implementation process.

The Minnesota Fathering Alliance. (1992) ***Working With Fathers; Methods and Perspectives***. Stillwater, Minnesota: Nu Ink Unlimited.

This volume is not a curriculum but a guideline to provide fathers with support, information, and parenting skills to be what they truly want to be - affectionate and nurturing fathers to their children. The authors explore sensitive issues important to fathers which family educators need to understand to help men change in their roles as fathers. There are some myths which need to be dispelled, such as fathers who can't provide an adequate standard of living for their families are not good fathers or men are not as nurturing as women, before practitioners can help empower fathers who want to be essential to their children's development. The book should be read in its entirety before sections are used as workshop tools; it would be most useful for a "fathers only" group but helpful material for a mixed gender, family focused sessions.

Quezada, Sheeley and Nickse, Ruth S. (1993). ***Community Collaborations for Family Literacy Handbook.*** New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

Fragmented service systems do not meet the needs of families. The purpose of the handbook is to demonstrate the structure and evolution of successful collaborations for implementation in community based family literacy efforts. Some of the elements of successful collaborations include: involving key players based on the potential contribution to the whole; achieving a shared vision but allowing for diverging opinions; building a feeling of ownership of the new product; and publicly reporting out the success of the collaborative effort. The handbook includes guidelines for any community collaboration process, using training materials used by six teams participating in the project described in the book. Profiles of the participating communities along with other examples of libraries developing collaborated family literacy programs serve as models for replication.

VIDEOS:

"The Power of Parenting: Parent and Child Interaction" and *"Empowering People: Parent Groups."* (1993) National Center for Family Literacy, 325 West Main Street, Suite 2001, Louisville, KY 40202-4251.

The two training videos and accompanying printed materials are intended for staff from programs supporting parent-child interactions. The videos and manuals give an overview of a session, either parent-child interaction or parent-peer support group, define key components of each — what it is and what it is not — and goals to be achieved. Different strategies to achieve the session's goals are discussed while the sample session is being observed. Each video identifies difficult situations which might occur and "problem-solves" several possible solutions. These videos would be particularly good for staff development, bringing together people from different programs to share experiences.

What's Your Story?

Do you have an Even Start story, lesson from experience, or unusually effective program approach or design that you'd like to share with other Even Start grantees? Look at Even Start will accept your ideas for consideration as brief articles or program profiles in future editions. Send your ideas or stories to:

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ISSUE FIVE

5

LOOK AT EVEN START

Even Start: Showing the way to educational reform

by Madeleine K. Kunin
Deputy Secretary
US Department of Education

Even Start's success in involving parents in their children's education provides important clues for the implementation of Goals 2000 and education reform. One vital ingredient for educational achievement, illustrated by the Even Start experience, is parental involvement.

Children and parents learning together and other parenting activities have demonstrated impressive results for Even Start. An important finding of the national evaluation is that Even Start children whose parents participate in a substantial amount of parenting education made significantly greater gains in a test of language development

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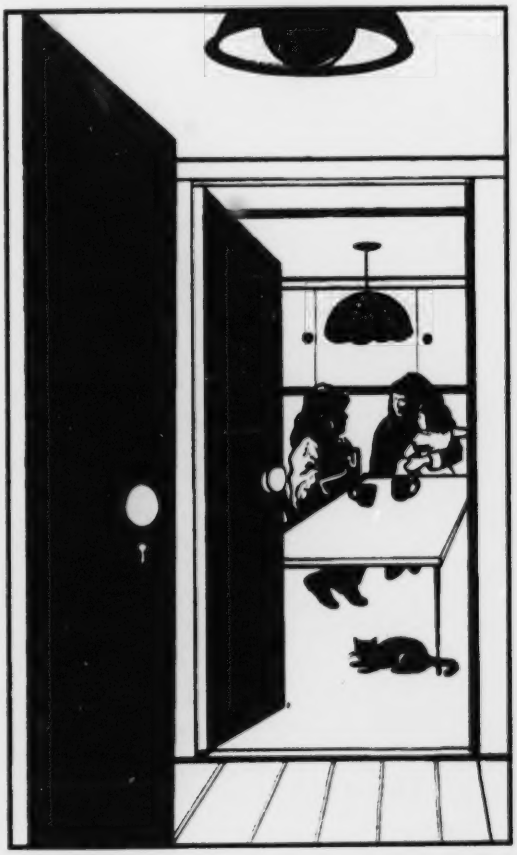
INSIDE

Program profile

Home visiting resources

Making the most of home visits

By Douglas R. Powell, Ph.D.
Purdue University



The inclusion of home visits as a key component of Even Start provides unique opportunities for programs to connect with families. The home setting enables staff to maximize the principle that effective programs "begin where the participant is."

What can be done to ensure the potential of home visiting is fully tapped in Even Start? Some answers are available from research and years of experience with home visiting in a variety of programs in the U.S.

Individualize the Visit

A key benefit of home visiting is the opportunity to tailor the content and style of a visit to the needs and characteristics of children and their families. Full attention can be given to the particular issues facing a family, seen and heard first hand by the home visitor.

A starting point for individualizing the content of a visit is to find out the dreams and concerns of parents for themselves and for their children. The work of the home visit will be far more meaningful to a parent when there are some shared understandings between parent and visitor about what should happen during the session. This demonstrates respect for the family's agenda.

The Ready for School Project at Nova University found it helpful to ask mothers to describe what they wanted to achieve in the program and what their expectations were for their own children. Staff found that mothers differ a good deal in their goals: some were concerned about discipline, others had an interest in their child's peer relations and social skills, and still others wanted to know how to improve their child's academic or creative skills. This information enabled the staff to select activities and topics from the curriculum that were responsive to the parents' concerns. It also helped staff find a common ground for talking with parents about ways to use program services to their fullest.

Some home visiting programs conduct a periodic needs assessment with families as the basis for decisions about the focus of home visits. This can be an especially helpful

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Making the most of home visits

Continued from cover

tool when parents are centrally involved in decisions about goals for a home visit. If parents are to "buy in" to the importance of a visit, they need to help actively shape the content of visits.

The "results" of needs assessments also need to be reviewed frequently. Family circumstances can change quickly, and the process of participating in an Even Start program may trigger new needs and goals not present at the beginning of program participation. In addition, families may be more willing to share information with staff over time as trust levels grow.

Be Flexible Yet Focused

Many Even Start families face difficult life circumstances, and the devastating effects of poverty can readily become a primary focus of the home visit. Problems related to inadequate housing, health care, nutrition, and social services can be understandably overwhelming.

Helping families find help in the community for meeting basic needs is a valuable program role. Home visits can serve as an informational "bridge" between families and resources in a community, including other Even Start components. Flexibility is essential if the home visit session is to be responsive to pressing family needs.

Flexibility should not lead to consistently diluting the focus of a home visit, however. If the intent of the home visit is to give primary attention to the educational needs of the child and parent, staff will need to balance the demands of competing family and individual needs. Positive program impact on child and adult literacy outcomes cannot be achieved without directly focusing on literacy experiences.

Some family literacy programs have found it beneficial to infuse literacy experiences into actions aimed at addressing basic family needs. For example, learning how to access a directory or telephone book as part of a search for needed services incorporates basic skills with the task of getting help for basic family needs.

Build on the Family Environment

Good home visits work within a family environment that has special strengths and limitations. Home visitors are unlikely to be successful when they see the home as mostly deficient and themselves as saviors, and when the substance of the visit is approached as a modification of a traditional classroom.

What objects in the home such as pots and pans can be incorporated into activities with young children? What daily family routines such as television viewing and mealtimes can be built upon to enhance parent-child interaction? What significant extended family members and friends should be acknowledged or included in a home visit? What adult interests such as car repair can be addressed by strengthening familiarity with the local library?

Home visitors need to set the stage for the active participation of family members in the visit. To be avoided is an arrangement where the parent is a passive bystander, mostly watching interactions between the child and home visitor, or the opposite situation where the child consistently is not an integral part of interactions involving the parent and home visitor. Home visiting programs have found that active family participation is likely to occur in a home visit when there are clear and accepted understandings about the purposes of the home visit.

Connect to Other Even Start Components

Home visiting can help Even Start programs achieve the goal of integrating various program components. A two-way flow of information is important here involving three pathways.

First, the home visit can be used to extend and refine important information included in other components such as the parent education and support program. General ideas about parenting, for example, can be tailored to individual situations.

Second, information secured by home visitors about family interests and needs can be used to shape the content and methods of other Even Start components. In this manner, the home visit serves as a catalyst for program responsiveness to families. Parent expectations of and reactions to the early childhood education component, for example, are often best explored on an individual basis, ideally carried out on the parent's turf.

Third, group-based discussions in other program components can be used to shed light on ways to strengthen home visiting. Some programs have found it informative to engage parents in a group discussion about the key learnings of the home visit. This helps all program staff better understand how the visit is being received and what changes, if any, are needed in the goals or substance of the visit.

In view of the numerous benefits of home visiting, it is not surprising there is growing interest nationally in the use of home visiting to address a myriad of educational and social service needs. By design, Even Start is well positioned to advance our professional understanding of how to maximize the benefits of home visiting for children and their families.

Home visiting tips from exemplary Even Start programs

The two Even Start programs first approved by the Program Effectiveness Panel (PEP) for inclusion in the National Diffusion Network offer these observations and ideas about effective home visits to Even Start families.

Even Start Family Center
Webster Groves School District
St. Louis, Missouri

- Seeing a family at home provides a better understanding of family strengths so that home visitors can individualize services.
- High-risk, young parents receive more frequent visits.
- Often a team visits the family to engage other children while one staff member works with the mother and the target child.
- Special concerns are addressed at the end of the visit so parents may stay focused on instructional activities.

Even Start Family Literacy Program
Oklahoma City Public Schools
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

- Home visitors teach at the center mornings and participate weekly in program and curriculum planning.
- The home visit is a perfect setting for the visitor to model desired behaviors and observe the parent and child as they experiment with new skills in the security of their own home.
- Most families welcome home visits because they feel special that those who teach in their center would come into their homes.

Both programs offer these home visiting safety ideas:

- Sign out so that the office knows where you are.
- Stay alert to your surroundings and trust your instincts.
- Dress professionally but comfortably. Be sensitive to your clients.
- Visit at prearranged, regularly scheduled times.
- Visit only if the mother is present.

Showing the way to reform

CONTINUED FROM COVER

than Even Start children whose parents did not take much parenting education. Building a young child's vocabulary is important for later school success. Evidence that parenting education can have a clear effect on child literacy gains is very encouraging.

The key to both the children's and parents' success is that children and parents are simultaneously discovering the excitement of learning; the results are dynamic. Not only do parents and children improve, but parents learn the value of education and often become their children's most enthusiastic coaches and boosters.

Parents are not only welcome in Even Start, they are required to participate in adult education and parenting education in order for their children to receive the benefits of early childhood education. The requirement for a home instructional component provides a unique opportunity for Even Start to tailor services to individual family needs.

Goals 2000 does not require parental involvement for all students, but it strongly encourages it. For the first time, the National Education Goals spell out the importance of Goals 2000: "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children."

A national parental involvement campaign will be launched by the administration this fall. Not only will parents be urged to participate in their children's education, but schools will be encouraged to open their doors to parents.

A recent Goals 2000 Satellite Town meeting on parental involvement revealed that many parents feel unwelcome in their children's schools and don't know how to get involved.

The Even Start experience can teach us how to include parents in their children's education from the start, and continue that bond between parent and child for life long learning.

Few children can become enthusiastic learners, and few teachers can become effective teachers, without the support and guidance of families. Finding time for homework, keeping track of assignments, and learning to praise good work—these are the family support systems which enable children to meet and often to exceed, high expectations.

Even Start showed the way; now, through Goals 2000, the larger education community has a path to follow.

Madeleine K. Kunin

Center for the Future of Children. (Winter, 1993). *Home Visiting.* Los Altos, California: The David Packard Foundation.

A compilation of eleven original articles, each analyzing, researching, or critiquing some aspect of home visiting programs as they relate to interventions in the neonatal and early stages of life. The lessons and conclusions of the articles may be translated to many service systems which use the strategy of home visiting. The Center for the Future of Children believes that a national strategy supporting home visiting programs would be effective in reducing child abuse and neglect and supporting families' strengths as long as each program is tailored to the local community service delivery system.

The editors have identified essential components to all successful home visiting programs such as: the intensity and duration of home visiting should be dictated by child care and family outcomes, not program design; staff must be well trained and respect the ethnic and cultural differences of families; expectations for families served by home visiting programs must be realistic; home visiting programs are not a substitute for direct financial support of families in need. Each of the articles in the journal focuses on a different aspect of home visiting, i.e. research and economic evaluation, program design, and staffing issues, in order to raise the reader's understanding of new directions in the field for the improvement of home visiting programs. Copies of the journal are available free of charge.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
The Head Start Home Visitor Handbook. Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. Write Head Start Publication Center, P.O. Box 26417, Alexandria, VA, 22313-0417.

This handbook is intended to help practitioners build a successful home-based program for Head Start children and their families, but would easily serve as a framework for all parent-child home visiting programs. The authors of the handbook, the Portage Project staff, combined their years of experience in home-based programs with the best practices of numerous programs in order to represent a broad view of home visiting programs. In addition to discussing the philosophical approaches to home visiting, the handbook provides a framework (i.e. recruitment, assessment, community resources, etc.) and effective implementation strategies for a model home-based program. The final chapter and appendices include sample curricula, suggested recordkeeping forms, ideas about how to motivate parents, suggestions for how to work with handicapped children, and an extensive listing of the best available additional resources.

QUESTIONS?

Q *Must an Even Start project provide home-based activities if it is a center-based program?*

A Yes. The Even Start program allows flexibility to match appropriate intervention to clients' needs for home-based programs. The statute requires the "provision of and monitoring of integrated instructional services to participating parents and children through home-based programs." See section 1054(b)(6) of the Act. All projects must include some instructional activities for all participating families that take place in the home. Home-based programs can provide greater opportunity to tailor services to individual family needs in a more informal setting. Home visits by qualified personnel also provide a chance to evaluate the utility of materials and training in parenting and other skills.

What's Your Story?

Do you have an Even Start story, lesson from experience, or unusually effective program approach or design that you'd like to share with other Even Start grantees? Look at Even Start will accept your ideas for consideration as brief articles or program profiles in future editions. Send your ideas or stories to:

Look at Even Start
c/o Mary Jean LeTendre
US Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

RMC Research Corporation
1000 Market Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Mrs. Davis saw a poster for Even Start in the grocery store and has come in to sign up. She's most interested in preschool for her son, but doesn't want any other services. She dropped out of high school when she had her son and is on welfare. She's a perfect Even Start candidate, but doesn't want to enroll in adult education classes. How can she be encouraged to try Even Start?

I've called on local school officials, met with the Division of Welfare staff, and talked at lots of community meetings. When people call about enrolling in our program they get us confused with other community-based projects. How can we clarify our image for people?

At a recent meeting, a staff member commented that our adult education classes are full and many parents are progressing quickly toward taking their GED. She applauds this as a success, but other staff are asking if the families being served are the ones we should be serving. We're asking ourselves: are the adults we've been taking into the program really the most in need?

5 principles of effective recruitment and retention

If any of these situations sounds familiar, you've struggled with one of the most common puzzles of running an Even Start program: Even Start is family-focused by definition and philosophy. But recruiting and keeping an entire family engaged in the program is a lot harder than maintaining the interest of one person.

Adding to the dilemma: those who are most in need — Even Start's clientele — have more barriers to overcome in the effort to stick with a program once they start.

But another aspect of Even Start may hold the solutions. As a demonstration program, Even Start as a concept depends on innovation and the creative energies of project staff. There is no one best way to set up an Even Start project; staff must learn what works best in each community. Some Even Start programs have been maturing since their inception in 1989, and knowledge about program design is beginning to develop. Key themes and lessons are emerging that others can adapt to enhance quality and solve problems in their own communities.

In the fall of 1994, the Department of Education identified five well-established Even Start programs that have discovered ways to recruit and retain families most in need of services. These programs will serve as "mentoring sites" for other Even Start programs facing recruitment and retention barriers.

These staff mentoring sites represent a new and experimental twist on technical assistance: programs with successful practices provide peer support to other projects, including on-site observation, problem-solving sessions, and assistance in developing individual improvement plans. The five staff mentoring sites looked at their long list of successful practices and have

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Five principles of effective recruitment and retention

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come up with five guiding principles that may be useful for other Even Start programs.

Programs must remain flexible and visible to successfully recruit and retain families.
Even Start's greatest strength is its flexibility to design services based on a family's agenda. Flexibility allows programs to adjust hours of operation, tailor curriculum to meet individual needs, and provide activities to reflect changing family schedules. The mentoring sites constantly revisit their services to develop new strategies when necessary. Many of these strategies come from the suggestions of families enrolled in the program.

The staff mentoring sites have also carefully crafted high profiles for themselves in the community, resulting in appropriate referrals and collaborations for better services. Each site goes about this differently: some spend a lot of time with collaborating agencies looking for more ways to help each other. Others canvass for potential clients at the laundromat, gas stations, or corner grocery stores. All use the media and have developed creative ways to advertise the program.

Programs must acknowledge family strengths, promote empowerment, and develop meaningful roles for parents.
Mentoring sites see themselves as catalysts for families to improve their lives. The longer a family participates, the greater the likelihood of gains in learning and improved parenting. Staff frequently talk to parents about their goals, ask if the program's activities are meeting their needs, and revise plans as needed. The sites tap parents' skills, using them as recruiters to organize activities, write stories for newsletters, and assist in administrative tasks. Parents identify incentives for each other to encourage and celebrate goal attainment. Parents who feel that their opinions count are more likely to make Even Start a family priority.

Recruitment must be continuous and systematic.
The mentoring sites have reflected this principle by developing strategies that fit the community profile, with special attention to efforts that get through to families with low literacy and other risk factors like unemployment. Many new Even Start programs can recruit quickly, but cannot lose sight of the importance of reaching those "hard to reach" families. Speaking about Even Start at a community meeting with another agency staff person or with a potential parent is an opportunity to "get out the message." Even Start needs to be described many times and in multiple ways to clear up confusion about its purpose and goals for families. The mentoring sites use a preparation period in which families get comfortable with Even Start expectations and make realistic commitments to full participation.

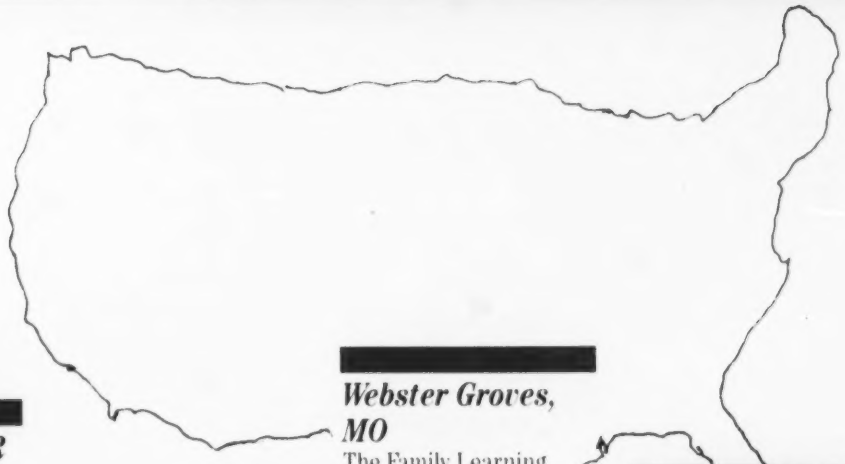
Recruitment and retention are interwoven and become everyone's job.
Recruitment isn't a distinct activity. It's a process intertwined with all of the activities offered by the program. For example, an initial visit with a family can include discussions about the family's expectations, which gives clues about retention issues: What support does the family need to enroll and stay in Even Start? What are reasonable first goals? What incentives can be built into the plan? At the mentoring sites, all staff become trained in active recruitment, because they never know when or where recruitment will "happen." Limited dollars mean that staff must perform multiple tasks, and must be ready to comfortably promote Even Start in casual conversations or unexpected opportunities. Eventually, the best recruiters are the families who are enrolled or who have graduated from the program.

"Give and take" in collaborations lead to enhanced commitment to recruit and retain those most in need.
Even Start, the "new kid on the block," has not always felt immediately welcomed in the community, but it is the perfect program for maximizing community resources through collaboration. The mentoring sites commit themselves to these collaborations for the sake of successful recruitment and retention. They sponsor open-houses, send notes to referral agencies about families, and invite other human service personnel to staff development workshops. Providing staff time to meet with other agencies helps link families to needed support like counseling, legal service, or financial assistance. These agencies are the most promising resource points for potential — and long term — Even Start participants.

— by Cynthia Harvell and C. Ralph Adler

Five sites shine in recruitment, retention

Five Even Start programs will serve as "mentoring sites" based on their proven recruitment and retention strategies, playing host to other Even Start professionals who are looking for ways to enhance their own success. Chosen by the Department of Education, the programs all enroll a high percentage of parents without a diploma and who have other risk factors. These sites involve families intensely in all core services over a long period of time.



Salem-Keizer, OR

The Even Start program at Salem-Keizer public schools in Oregon provides very intense services to a relatively small number of families. Based on the Kenan model, this program features highly integrated activities with a particular emphasis on parent-child time. ***Recruitment*** components include pre-application visits, telephone interviews to determine family readiness and eligibility, and the use of participants as recruiters. ***Retention*** strategies include the integration of program philosophy into all activities, a combination of strong support from staff, expectations that families will "do for themselves," intensity and integration of program activities, and daily parent-child activities.

Mesa, AZ

This community's Family Tree Program builds on the Kenan model to offer a complete support system for limited English-proficient families. ***Recruitment*** elements include networking, door-to-door campaigns, visits to homes by parent liaisons, a Placement Factors chart which helps determine eligibility and level of need, and open invitations for families to visit the center. ***Retention*** strategies include the "complete support system" mode, promotion of peer support "off campus," integration of activities across the primary educational strands, home visits, vocational education, and parent involvement in selecting/designing activities.

Webster Groves, MO

The Family Learning Center believes that building family strengths benefits the community, enhancing the efficacy of low income, under-educated, minority people. ***Recruitment*** strategies include a family advocate who builds networks for referrals, asking participants to "spread the word," aggressive door-to-door recruitment, helping parents through the application process, a point system to identify those most in need, and serving most applicants in some capacity even if they're not with the full program. ***Retention*** approaches include individualization of services; helping participants with personal goals; home visits; peer teaching; crisis management; services such as wake-up calls and serving breakfast; a "comfortable" location for services; promotion of a sense of community.

New Castle, IN

This Even Start program has rural southern roots, providing home based-services for helping parents become teachers for their own children. ***Recruitment*** techniques include a highly personalized, invitational approach, letters sent to eligible families notifying them of their "nomination," home visits for applications, and a community steering committee that helps identify potential participants. ***Retention*** activities include the design of local materials that enhance the personalized approach, home visits and follow-up activities, weekly cluster meetings that bring together parent/child dyads for guided parenting and social activities, concurrent parent enrollment in adult education programs.

Madison-Oneida, NY

This rural Family Learning Center, serving two counties and ten school districts, blends Kenan, High Scope, New York Home Based Preschool, and Parents as Teachers components. ***Recruitment*** activities that have proven successful include networking with staff in more than 60 other agencies, examination of this process to discover developmental levels of network building with an agency, a shared decision-making process in which new recruits collaborate with a staff member to "chunk out" goals and plans. ***Retention*** strategies include working to change the belief that things cannot change, setting individual participant goals, focused parent-child activities to offer guided parenting, a Parent Room maintained by participants, mini-internships for participants.

Tish Rennings

In memory of Tish Rennings who died on November 26, 1994. She helped so many of us begin in Even Start. May we memorialize her spirit, commitment, and work on behalf of America's families.

QUESTIONS?

What have we learned in the first four years of Even Start about recruitment and retention?

Even Start is serving a very needy population. The final report from the national evaluation of the first four years in Even Start tells us that more than two-thirds of the adults recruited did not graduate from high school, more than half of the families' total income is below $10,000, and the average 3- or 4-year old recruited for Even Start scores below the 10th percentile on a nationally-normed vocabulary test (PPVT). The report goes on to say that virtually all programs offer the core components, and practically all families participate in all core services, but the amount of contact hours for families varies dramatically. Programs that retained families longer and had high number of contact hours had significantly greater gains in outcomes for the children. When parents received intense parenting education, their children had significantly greater gains on a vocabulary test, which correlates with parenting and later school success. Similarly, the more intense the early childhood education, the greater the improvement in language development. If families received "average" exposure to Even Start services, we did not see these gains. Therefore, we have learned that intensity and duration of services does make a difference and should become the top priority for all Even Start programs.

Highlighting Even Start Technical Assistance Opportunities

Even Start Project Director's Handbook

The **Even Start Project Director's Handbook** will be a resource notebook targeted for local administrators of Even Start projects. It will contain a series of 8-10 topical "how-to" papers, pertinent information from ED on the Even Start law and regulations, and an annotated bibliography of resources for family literacy programs. The first three "how-to" papers are currently under production: Mildred Winter of Missouri Parents as Teachers on instructional home visits; Douglas Powell of Purdue University on parenting education; and Bonnie Freeman of the National Center for Family Literacy on integration of core services. Look for the first three papers early in April.

Guide to Program Quality

The Guide to Program Quality will summarize what has been learned through national evaluations, research from related fields, and practitioners' experiences about the elements that constitute a quality Even Start program. The guide will provide quality considerations as well as indicators of potential problems in eleven program areas: recruitment, retention of families, parent-child interaction/parent education, home visiting, collaborations, adult literacy, early childhood, staff development, integration of services, transition, and program management.

Sample indicators and a workbook-like format were shared with state coordinators at the recent Even Start regional conferences. The guide format will combine statements of indicators with examples from actual programs to illustrate the ways in which programs have implemented specific indicators.

The guide will have multiple uses. State coordinators will find the guide useful for monitoring and program improvement. Local programs will likely use the guide for self-review and also as a source of ideas for focusing local evaluations.

Even Start Bulletin Board System (ES-BBS)

The **ES-BBS** is sponsored by the Even Start Information System (ESIS) Technical Assistance Office at Fu Associates, Ltd. It has been up and running since June of 1994 and Fu Associates welcomes all project directors, State Coordinators, and local evaluators to become regular users. The ES-BBS regularly posts announcements about ESIS data collection, the new Even Start legislation, and various other topics relevant to service delivery. This can be a fast, economical, and flexible means to exchange and disseminate information for everyone involved in Even Start. To access ES-BBS, use a modem to connect to 1-800-851-6183 or call Fu Associates for assistance (1-800-883-3836) to use the ES-BBS.

RMC Research Corporation
1000 Market Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Bonus recruitment/ retention tool!

Recruitment/Retention Checklist

The five principles listed below were developed by Even Start programs that have had success in recruiting and retaining client families. The supporting strategies are ones used by these programs and others that reviewed these principles at the 1994 Even Start regional conferences. Do you use any of these strategies? Would they work for you? Are there others you can think of? Are there others you might add?

TEAR OFF AND USE FOR YOUR PROGRAM

1

- ❑ Are your brochures and printed materials highly visible in the community?
- ❑ Are materials easy to read and available in other languages?
- ❑ Is your program continuous throughout the summer?
- ❑ Are some of your classes held in the public schools?
- ❑ Does the program offer childcare and transportation for families in all components?
- ❑ Is the program offered evenings and some weekends?
- ❑ Are activities offered for the whole family?
- ❑ Does staff meet initially with a family at home to discuss the program?
- ❑ Do new families try out an activity before enrollment?
- ❑ Do recruiters have several contacts with families during the pre-enrollment preparation period?
- ❑ Do you have staff on other agency boards?
- ❑ Do staff go to Head Start, preschool, and WIC registrations?
- ❑ Do you send flyers home in the AFDC checks?
- ❑ Do you write news releases about special events and student achievements?

2

- ❑ Do parents plan activities?
- ❑ Do parents "job shadow" in your program or in the community?
- ❑ Do parents set their individual goals in manageable pieces?
- ❑ Do parents identify incentives for goal achievement?
- ❑ Are parents used to recruit new families?
- ❑ Do parents mentor or act as "buddies" with new parents?
- ❑ Do staff ask parents to visit their neighborhood with them to meet new families?
- ❑ Do parents have input about curriculum planning?
- ❑ Do parents have an opportunity to evaluate the program?
- ❑ Do parents serve on your program's committees?
- ❑ Do you invite families to share their ethnic traditions and holiday celebrations?
- ❑ Do parents have an opportunity to identify skills which they might share with the group?
- ❑ Do staff and parents receive training to improve communication skills?
- ❑ Do you consciously develop ways to support the self-esteem of participants and staff?

3

- ❑ Do you publicize in the local media (radio, TV, newspapers)?
- ❑ Are parent/family successes celebrated publicly?
- ❑ Do you leave flyers at libraries, schools, welfare offices, WIC and public health clinics, Head Start and preschool programs?
- ❑ Do you "advertise" on billboards and on public transportation?
- ❑ Do parents give ideas where and how to recruit new families?
- ❑ Do staff visit high poverty areas frequently and talk to families living there?
- ❑ Do you have meetings in housing projects?
- ❑ Do staff visit other child and adult education programs in town regularly?
- ❑ Is there a common intake mechanism for human service providers in your community?
- ❑ Is there contact with the families on the waiting list?
- ❑ Do staff stay in contact with referring agency about a family?
- ❑ Do staff send invitations to visit Even Start to families on the Head Start waiting list?
- ❑ Does your program use a prioritized list of risk factors for recruitment?

4

- ❑ Do you discuss recruitment at every staff meeting?
- ❑ Are there monthly goals for recruitment for staff members?
- ❑ Do staff members devise and share their own recruitment strategies?
- ❑ Do you actively support "team-building" among your staff?
- ❑ Can your staff articulate your program's recruitment strategies?
- ❑ Do current and graduating participants have a role in recruiting new families?
- ❑ Do parents have clear expectations when enrolling in Even Start?
- ❑ Is the first contact often made in a family's home?
- ❑ Do parents understand the time commitment when enrolling?
- ❑ Are attendance charts used to encourage participation?
- ❑ Are students rewarded for attendance and achievements?
- ❑ Does your program recognize multiple symbols of goal attainment, e.g., voter registration, obtaining a license or library card, registering for WIC or job training, etc.?
- ❑ Do staff have periodic contact with families who temporarily drop out of the program?

5

- ❑ Do staff have regular meetings with collaborating agencies?
- ❑ Is your school board actively involved in your program?
- ❑ Are staff development workshops open to the staffs at collaborating agencies?
- ❑ Does your advisory committee include members from several community agencies?
- ❑ Are case workers from referring agencies invited to visit your site with families?
- ❑ Do you plan family events with other agencies?
- ❑ Do staff volunteer in the schools and at community functions?
- ❑ Do other programs have activities at your Even Start site?
- ❑ Is your staff trained in communication and conflict resolution?
- ❑ Does staff stay in touch with referring agencies about families' progress?
- ❑ Can collaborating agencies such as Head Start articulate what Even Start is?
- ❑ Do you offer space in your newsletter to other agencies?
- ❑ Do your parents serve as volunteers in the public schools?
- ❑ Do parents give presentations at collaborating agencies?

TEAR OFF AND USE FOR YOUR PROGRAM

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Learners' lives as *curriculum*

BY DR. GAIL WEINSTEIN-SHR

The United States is a nation of stunning diversity. Beginning with the first native-European contact, waves of immigration from all corners of the globe have intensified the degree of linguistic and cultural diversity and increased the challenge of providing educational programs to changing families. By best estimates, there are as many as 14 million adults in the United States whose native language is not English and who have serious difficulty speaking, understanding, reading, or writing English. The results are felt in every workplace, school, and community.

The results are also felt powerfully within families in many ways. For example, in language minority families, language and literacy play a particularly poignant role in exacerbating normal stresses among generations. Because children are usually in a position to learn English more quickly than their parents, roles in immigrant families are often reversed: adults depend on children to translate and solve language and literacy-related problems.

CONTINUED INSIDE

Editor's note: *in this article, Dr. Gail Weinstein-Shr, Associate Professor of English at San Francisco State University, shares some of the lessons of her experience with immigrant families. She discusses four themes on the lives of learners as material for educational experiences. These themes strongly resemble Even Start principles that encourage practitioners to respond to the needs, concerns, experiences, and strengths of families. We invite you to consider Dr. Weinstein-Shr's thoughts in relation to the families you serve.*

Learners' lives as curriculum

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

When children no longer feel that their parents are in control, when the knowledge of elders is no longer seen as useful, the family loses its ability to teach and protect its members. Adults lose moral authority over children. School failure, alcoholism, drug abuse, and gang membership are common consequences.

Intergenerational stresses are one example of how a real and significant family concern can become a building block for Even Start program development and service to families. Even Start can help families develop English language and literacy skills while providing a forum to tackle the problems of daily life, remember and celebrate the past, and strengthen the connections among the generations. To address the needs of culturally diverse learners, Even Start practitioners may wish to explore these promising directions.

Even Start programs can best serve families when they...

...address the needs that adults have defined for themselves

"When we got to America, my sons began to grow faster. Sports and American food made them grow tall. Before, in Laos, they liked Lao food, and they ate everything. Now they don't like our food any more. They like McDonald's and they drink lots of Pepsi."

Many Southeast Asian mothers say they are concerned that their children no longer like their cooking. Concerns that may seem trivial are often "codes" for adults' more serious concerns, like losing authority over older children. Even the most sympathetic administrators and teachers may have priorities that do not match those of adult learners. A program focusing on early childhood programs may miss the clues that parents are more concerned about their relationships with their pre-teens and the imminent dangers of gangs or drugs. A pre-set curriculum featuring practice in the writing of checks may overlook the fact that many refugees do not elect to keep their money in a bank.

Asking, watching, and listening are essential for learning about the realities of adult learners' lives. Learner writing, language experience stories, and interviews (collected in English or translated from the native language) are all rich potential sources of information about the family and its concerns. Adult learners themselves can provide input in planning and development of curriculum and in the daily enactment of classroom instruction. It is also critical to open channels of communication with knowledgeable community leaders who can be important allies -- and sources of information.

...provide opportunities to integrate old with new, tradition with change

"I help my kids. I teach them good things. I play with them. I protect and correct them. My kids help me too. They bring me things. They teach me English. Maybe they will take care of me when I grow old."

In the rush to teach parenting skills, we sometimes forget that most immigrant adults come from communities that have been parenting effectively for centuries, resulting in strong, interconnected families. Some traditional ways of doing things may continue to work while other strategies become inappropriate or unworkable in a new setting. While information about American laws and belief systems are invaluable for newcomers, the experiences and guidance of others who have already managed this transition may be the most powerful and helpful strategy.

There is growing evidence that people who are literate in their native language learn a second language more quickly in the classroom. In addition, people who are proud of their native culture seem to experience more success in adding an additional language and culture to their repertoire. Conversely, those who are made to feel ashamed of their language or culture pay the price in terrible ways. In times past, some Native American children were often sent to boarding schools where they were taught to replace one world view with another. Alienation from their own language and culture are now associated with a generation that has the highest suicide and alcoholism rate of any group in the United States.

Even Start programs must work to increase options without undermining the linguistic and cultural underpinnings of family life. Integration of old and new is

not an easy process, but it can be joyful when opportunities exist to discuss, compare, reflect, and experiment.

...nurture a culture of the generations to share knowledge

"I love my grandchildren very much. I am learning English so I can talk to my grandchildren. But I also want them to understand a little Chinese. I think every language is useful!"

When adults are asked why they want to learn English, they rarely raise "survival" or "life skill" concerns. Many of these newcomers are excellent survivors (or many of them would not have made it here!). Apart from access to adequate employment opportunities, adults' most pressing need is communicating with children and grandchildren. A critical function of language is the transmission of culture and values, including teaching children where they have come from and where they are headed.

Stories of the past, folktales, fables, proverbs, and direct instruction facilitate that process, and all depend on shared language. When families find themselves in new environments and children are learning a new primary language, these channels for passing on life wisdom can be interrupted.

Thoughtful family literacy efforts can help reestablish those channels. Proven strategies include encouraging the development of mutual languages between children and adults (including native languages for children), weaving oral history and culture stories into the fabric of educational work, and inviting children to learn from their own community elders.

"My boy left for school every day at 8 and came home at 4. My neighbor told me he had been expelled months before. I depended on my boy to read all the papers from the school. I had no way to know."

A father does not know what is happening with his son. A Puerto Rican grandmother hears a Chinese woman complain that she feels like a stranger in her own house because she doesn't understand when her grandchildren speak English. At this moment, she learns that she is not alone; her dilemmas are shared by others. There are no easy answers for managing family life in a stressful world, but when adults turn to each other to compare experiences about children's schools, discipline, community services, language use at home, or any number of issues, a community of support begins to build. When adult learners share experiences, they begin a process of reflection and collective problem-solving. Family literacy programs offer extraordinary opportunities for those communities to grow.

Family educators are also learners, often doing pioneering work in uncharted territory. Comparing experiences with other family literacy providers, both within and across projects, can help us learn about the adult learners we serve, about what works, and what doesn't. With the collective wisdom of our professional community, we can find the support for the challenges that we face in our exciting work.

The attached tear-off page can be used to start some spirited discussions among the planners and staff members in your Even Start program. The questions on Side 1 are designed to suggest some specific activities or strategies that relate to these four theme areas. Side 2 contains a chart for filling in your own strategies (and for identifying areas you may wish to develop further).

Learners' lives as curriculum: examples from the field

In this issue, Gail Weinstein-Shr offered examples of how programs serving immigrant families can structure programs around a family's most pressing concerns. Here are some examples from Even Start programs that demonstrate how other types of families can be served in similar ways.

From Cherokee Nation Even Start, Tahlequah, OK This program conducts a Family Needs Assessment to learn about families' concerns about education, housing, nutrition, transportation, health, child care, employment, and other areas. Also, echoing Ms. Weinstein's advice about intergenerational sharing, the Cherokee Nation Even Start uses Cherokee myths and legends to expand experiences in reading, grammar, language, and comprehension assignments.

From Migrant Child Development Program, Gettysburg, PA This program asks each family to keep a Writing Folder in which parents and children write on a new topic every month. The writings from parents were so full of information about what is on parents' minds, the program decided to publish them as "La Luciernaga," a booklet in which parents express their needs and dreams.

From Tangipahoa Parish Even Start, Hammond, LA Adult learners provide the curriculum since there is no basic, structured curriculum which is followed in the ESL classes. Adults are asked what they need to know and the ESL teacher takes it from there. Parents and children are encouraged to share their life experiences, their values and beliefs, and their concerns and celebrations.

From Even Start Program, Project Kaateme, Tucson, AZ Coordinator Rosa Anchondo says that the close-knit relationships in the New Pascua community are the main source of understanding about parent and family concerns. "We as staff can see more clearly what the needs of our parents are since we are in the inside instead of the outside looking in," she said. "What we need to do as educators is get to the real issues of learning which stem from community and culture. How do we as Native Americans learn? Nurturing Yaqui heritage is also a priority: we do this by teaching adults Yaqui language and do things about being an active cultural member, such as cooking."

Even Start Program, Turtle Mountain Tribe, Belcourt, ND Cultural tradition and language are integrated into monthly family activities. Staff explain how games were played by ancestors, drum playing and construction are demonstrated, and the meanings of songs are discussed. Elders of the community tell family stories of how they lived during their childhood, how they were raised and disciplined, and changes that took place over the years. Traditional dancers perform, explain the meaning of routines, and explain how costumes were made.

QUESTIONS?

Will there be non-regulatory guidance for Even Start?

Yes. The non-regulatory guidance for Even Start has been out for review and comment, and is receiving final approval. Grantees can receive copies from state coordinators or from the US Department of Education, Compensatory Education Programs, 600 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-6132.

Is there guidance about participant eligibility, especially families who lack mastery of basic skills in speaking, reading, or writing English?

The new legislation clarifies the two primary criteria that must be met to receive services: (1) low level of adult literacy or lack of proficiency in English and (2) low income. If families meet the eligibility requirements described in Section 1206 of the Even Start legislation, and qualify as most-in-need of Even Start Services, they may participate.

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Federal Update

Two regional Even Start meetings will be held this year for State Coordinators and new grantees needing training in the national evaluation. Details will follow.

Congress, in reauthorizing the Adult Education Act, is consolidating the adult education programs with vocational education. The "Workforce Development Act" will be considered in October. Neither the House nor the Senate included Even Start Family Literacy programs as part of the reauthorization of Adult Education.

TEAR HERE

Checklist
Learners' lives as curriculum

1. Address the needs that adults have defined for themselves.

Have community leaders and key players been identified for adult learners you wish to serve?
Are these leaders invited to teach you about the needs, concerns, and interests of adult learners?
Are adult learners given ways to express their concerns and interests?
Are adult learners given ways to express their concerns about parenting and about family life?
Does the program have bilingual personnel or volunteers to talk to adult learners in the languages they know best?
Do language teaching materials reflect the concerns that adult learners raise?
Are narratives about learner experiences collected?
Are learner narratives used in the language and literacy classroom?

2. Provide opportunities to integrate old with new, tradition with change

Do adult learners have an opportunity to discuss how they did things in their country [or region] of origin?
Do they have an opportunity to learn about new ways and new resources in the United States?
Do adult learners have an opportunity to evaluate for themselves, in discussion with peers, which strategies for living to keep, and which strategies to change?
Do teachers and administrators have information about parenting, schooling and discipline in adult learners' countries or regions of origin?
Is acquisition of parents' native language and understanding of place of origin encouraged for children?
Is parents' native language used or demonstrably valued in any way in the program?

3. Nurture ways for the generations to share knowledge

Is there an opportunity in the educational curriculum for adult learners to remember and document the past?
Is there an opportunity for children in the program to hear about or imagine what life was like in their parents' country [or region] of origin?
Does the program use folk tales, oral history, proverbs, or other media for transmitting native cultural values?
Do family members or community elders play any part in the program?

4. Foster a community among learners and practitioners

Do adult learners in this program have an opportunity to share experiences with one another?
Is there any opportunity for collective problem-solving among adult learners?
Are the learnings and reflections of adult learners made available to adult learners within the present and future program or in other programs?
Do practitioners have an opportunity to discuss successes, concerns, and insights on a regular basis as part of the job (i.e., on paid staff time)?
Is time built for team-building and fun, both for learners in the classroom and for practitioners at work?
Are the learnings and reflections of program personnel made available, in some form, to personnel within the present and future program or in other programs?

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Planning for Diversity: Discussion Grid

Brainstorm with colleagues to fill in the cells. Feel free to use ideas from the checklist (see other side), or to generate new ones.

ISSUES ➡ COMPONENTS (one model) ⬇	How can needs of adults, as they themselves define them, be identified and addressed?	How can native language and culture be supported? How can tradition and change be integrated?	How can channels for intergenerational transmission of knowledge be restored and/or nurtured?	How can community be fostered among learners and practitioners who serve them?
1. Early childhood education				
2. Adult education/ English as a second language				
3. Parent time				
4. Parents and children together				